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A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA: 20 MINUTES

You asked me to speak about Christianity in Asia, and I'm delighted. I love Asia. I was born there, I was married there, and I guess I have lived in Asia longer than almost anyone else in this room. I'm an American Asian. I'm supposed to talk about it for 15 or 20 minutes. That would be 100 years a minute. Isn't that a little fast for a retired professor? Well, it is my favorite subject, so I'll give it a try. But I warn you, anything I say about Asia in 20 minutes is only going to be true about very small parts of Asia, and false about other parts. Asia is too big--one third of all the land in the world; more than half of all the world's people. Here in North America we have only 6% of the world's people--Asia has 60%! And at 100 miles a minute I am going to run past most of those 3.5 billion people. I'd better start fast.

I'll slice the long, long story into four thick slices: 4 great overlapping periods of the history of Christianity in Asia: Apostolic, the first 500 years to 500 AD; Nestorian, the next 700 years (to 1300); Catholic, 600 years (1200-1800); and Protestant, two hundred (1800-2000). Then I'll cut it into 4 very thin slices: 4 missionaries, one for each period as somewhat representative of the period. I'm not saying that these were the 4 greatest missionaries, or even the best known--they all made mistakes.

[[But with all their faults they were examples of how the love of God and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit can work in human history through anyone who will follow Jesus.]]
And to each period I'll attach one short lesson to be learned from history.

^{Period # 1.}
 1. The period, Apostolic (1-500 AD; the name, Thomas; the lesson, obedience. ^{missionary}

In this earliest period, the 500 years from the apostles up to the first great church schisms, you might expect the name to be Paul. But I chose an unlikely candidate, Thomas. I chose him because he went east. Paul went west, to Europe. Thomas, according to a very ancient and strong tradition went east as far as India. He is called "the Apostle to Asia" And he has another name, Thomas the doubter. He earned it. In the Bible, he kept interrupting Jesus's sermons, and didn't believe the other disciples when they said that Jesus rose from the dead. And in the tradition, which is apocryphal, in parts believable, Thomas even refused to obey Jesus when the Risen Lord ordered him to go to India. He said, in effect, "Not me. It's too far, and I don't speak Indian". But to my mind, doubting Thomas is the perfect example of how one does not have to be perfect to be used by God as a missionary. It takes more than belief to make a missionary. It takes obedience, the first lesson in mission. Thomas did finally believe, but he didn't become a missionary until he obeyed. And that's all I can say for this period. Remember, 20 minutes!

2. The second period is the Nestorian period (500-1300 AD). Alopen is the missionary's name, and the second lesson is Perseverance.

Alopen was a Persian ^{on Silk Road} (from Iraq). We don't usually associate Iraq ^{these days} today with pioneering mission, but he was the first recorded Christian missionary to reach China. He was a Nestorian, which meant in those days that he wasn't a mainline denominational Christian. The mainline Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox gave them that name, and called the Nestorians heretics. But they called themselves the Church of the East.

He reached China in 635 AD. Not many westerners remember that there were Christians in China only 2 generations later than St. Columba brought the gospel from Ireland to my barbarian ancestors in Scotland. But unlike Scotland, in China that early Christian mission failed. It was wiped out about 900 AD and the Christians simply disappeared. As it turned out, however, Alopen had not really failed. All along the Old Silk Road in Central Asia his Nestorians had planted the seed and it was along that road, 300 years later, that the gospel came again to China.

Just how the missionaries were allowed to come back is almost unbelievable. Here I have to slip in another name, not a missionary name, not by any means--the name Genghis Khan. If Thomas the doubter is hard to

justify as a proper missionary, how much more difficult to imagine the "terror of the world", Genghis Khan, as an agent of God. But God moves in mysterious ways. Genghis Khan was trying to unify the fighting tribes of Mongolia into a force to conquer the world. He found that the simplest way would be to marry, or have his sons marry, the daughters of their chiefs.

So he married his fourth son, Tolui, to Sorkaktani, daughter of the chief of the Keraites, and by the grace of God, Sorkaktani was a Christian. The Keraites of Central Asia had been converted by Nestorians around the year 1000 and had been Christians for 200 years. And Sorkaktani, Genghis Khan's daughter-in-law, a princess royal, gave birth to three sons, each one of whom became an emperor. Hulagu became emperor of Persia. Mangu became emperor (Kakhan) of Mongolia. The third son is best known of all, Kublai Khan, who became Emperor of China.

It was an historic breakthrough. Europe had produced the first Christian emperor, Constantine, and Europe became Christian. Now, some people thought, with three sons of a Christian mother as Asian emperors, Asia would have three Asian Constantines, and surely the whole continent would soon become Christian. But it didn't happen. Not one of Sorkaktani's sons became a Christian. Persia remained Muslim; Mongolia remained largely animist; and Kublai Khan--though for his Christian mother's sake he asked the Pope to send more missionaries to China--he eventually leaned toward Buddhism.

The lesson for mission here is: Don't depend on a Constantine. It's only when the missionary is in God's hands, not the emperor's, that he or she is anything but just another liability. If the state supports the mission, guard against corruption. When the state is hostile, never give up. Persevere. Obedience and Perseverance--two periods, two lessons.

3. The third period is the Catholic period, 1500-1800. The name is Matthew Ricci, and the lesson is Adaptation.

300 years after Kublai Khan, Mongol emperors of Asia turned Muslim, and persecutions began. Few Christians survived, except in scattered pockets of the Middle East and India. But once more Christian missionaries came bravely back to Asia, and their perseverance was rewarded. This time they were Roman Catholic. Matthew Ricci was not their most famous missionary-- that was Francis Xavier-- but Ricci headed their most famous Mission, the Jesuit mission in Peking. Ricci was the pioneer of a fundamental Catholic missionary policy, adaptation. Protestants call it indigenizing or contextualizing-- it is communicating the Christian faith across cultural boundaries.

In 17th c. China it was amazingly successful, for Ricci was a skillful adapter. To look more religiously Chinese, he had the Jesuit missionaries wear Buddhist robes. When he discovered that the Confucian elite despised Buddhist priests he changed their robes to look like Confucian scholars. And when the scholars still looked down on them for the way they spoke Chinese so poorly, he insisted on more thorough language study. Then he challenged the scholars. He said in effect, "You say we don't know your language and your classics. How well do you know them yourselves?", and he picked up a famous Confucian text, "Can you repeat this from memory?" They laughed. "Of course". Then he said, "Can you repeat it backwards". And again they laughed, "No one can do that". But Ricci said, "I can", and he did. From that time on, few dared to accuse the Jesuits of ignorance.

Building on that success, Ricci was able to take the gospel to the very heart of the empire, to the emperor himself. But in the end, it was Jesuit success in adapting the faith that a century or so later led to their downfall. They adapted too far. It won for them the emperor's ear, but it lost them the confidence of their own highest authority, the Pope. They were accused of spending too much time adapting, and too little evangelizing.

[[Most questionable of all was the advice they were reportedly giving to their converts about Confucian ceremonies and ancestor worship: Go to the ceremonies like all good Chinese, but conceal a crucifix in your robes, and secretly, in your hearts, worship the true God]].

In the "Rites Controversy" that followed, the Pope ruled against the Jesuits, and they turned for help to the friendly Chinese emperor. He said, "Tell the pope that the ceremonies aren't really religious", and was happy to take their side of the argument. It was a costly mistake. They were caught in a trap between loyalty to Pope or obedience to an Emperor. The Pope demanded obedience or dismissal. The emperor was furious at a foreign ruler arrogantly interfering in the internal affairs of his own empire. The end result was that all the missionaries were ordered out of China.

[[Who was right? Pope or Jesuits?. I think the Pope was the better theologian, but he lost his best missionary society. And the Jesuits were the better theologians. But they made the mistake of shading the truth for the sake of better communication, and in so doing lost their chance to keep communicating. The only real winner was the emperor.]]

The lesson for missions is this: adaptation has limits, and the end does not justify the means.

4. The last period is the Protestant period, 1800-2000. The name, if you will ex-forgive me, is Samuel Austin Moffett. (My father would be very unhappy with me for using him as an example, and he would be right. He objected strongly when people gave him credit that belongs to a whole team of missionaries. But I'm biased, and he's the missionary I know best, and I have only 20 min.)

*My father
He doesn't like
- he's a Scudler
Adams
I don't know*

The lesson from my father and his colleagues in Korea is a balance to the China "Rites Controversy". It comes in two parts. First, adaptation has limits, but without adaptation mission doesn't start. And second, adaptation may make a good start but without evangelism it rarely reaches its goal.

He went to Korea 115 years ago in 1890. When he tried to settle in the north, he was thrown out of the city six times in one year. But he kept coming; they tired of throwing him out; and the first surges of mass conversions occurred in his territory. He founded the first Protestant seminary. He was the first Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. He was there when the Presbyterian Mission in Korea, adopted a missionary policy, that for next 100 years shaped an unparalleled explosion of church growth in Asia. In 1890 there were about 250 Protestant church members in

Korea, in 1950 600,000; in 2000 12,000,000 (some say 15,000,000).

The policy they adopted was called the Nevius Method, after a Princeton Seminary graduate John Nevius, class of 1854 who tried it in China, but couldn't persuade his mission to accept it. It is much like Ricci's principle of adaptation, but with some important differences. In Korea, the missionaries started with their Bible, not their clothes. Lamin Sanneh says that one big difference between imperialists and missionaries is that foreign imperialists make the people learn their foreign language; but the missionaries make themselves learn the people's language. In Korea Catholics translated the missal, the liturgy, but kept the Bible in Latin; the Protestants translated the Bible, and that made all the difference..

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They adapted in other ways too, but cautiously. They used a Korean word for God, but not one that was being worshiped. Like the Confucianists they taught righteousness and the importance of education. My father's motto was "Every time I plant a church, I want to start a school next to it." Like the Buddhists, the Protestants taught purity and the promise of a future life. They didn't deny the parallels. They used these parallels with Korea's old religious culture as bridges, not obstacles--bridges with which to make friends and provide opportunities for dialogue and evangelism. (But my time is up).

Let me close with a challenge. After these 2000 years of Christianity in Asia through which we've raced so fast, what does Asian Christianity look like to Asians today? I'll leave you with a sobering picture. Asia is the home of all five of the world's "great religions--

Confucius was born in Asia and most Confucianists are in Asia.

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Why? Think about it. When you graduate, what should you and I be doing about Asia?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

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A 9/27/2005

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ASIA STATISTICS

(from World Christian Encyclopedia, 2000)

1900

2000

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Asia Population | 956,196,000 (100%) | 3,696,958,087 (100%) |
| Asia Christians | 21,897,500 (2.3%) | 312,849,400 (8.5%) ¹ |
| [Roman Cath. | 11,162,800 (1.2%) | 110,480,000 (3.0) |
| Protestant ² | 4,531,500 (0.5%) | 209,428,700 (21.8%) |
| Orthodox | 6,864,200 (0.7%) | 14,113,500 (0.4%)] |
| Asia Non-Christian | | |
| Muslim | 156,139,600 (16.3%) | 832,878,900 (22.5%) |
| Hindu | 202,546,700 (21.2%) | 805,119,900 (21.8%) |
| Non-rel. | 47,000 | 608,594,400 (16.5%) |
| [Christian | 21,897,500 (2.3% | 312,849,400 (8.5%)] |
| China flk | 379,914,700 (39.7%) | 383,407,700 (10.4%) |
| Buddhist | 126,618,500 (13.2%) | 354,354,700 (9.6%) |
| Anim/Shaman | 50,564,000 (5.3%) | 128,295,500 (3.5%) ³ |
| World Population | | 6,000,000,000 |
| World Christians | 558,131,200 (34.5%) | 2,000,000,000 (33.0%) |
| Muslims | 199,940,900 (12.3%) | 1,188,242,800 (19.6%) |
| Hindus | 203,003,440 (12.5%) | 811,336,300 (13.4%) |
| Non-Relig. | 3,023,600 (0.2%) | 768,159,000 (12.7%) |
| China Fl.R | 380,006,000 (23.5%) | 384,806,700 (6.4%) |
| Buddhist | 127,176,800 (7.8%) | 359,981,800 (5.9%) |
| Aim/Shaman | 117,558,400 (7.3%) | 228,366,500 (3.8%) |
| Jews | 12,292,200 (0.8%) | 14,434,000 (0.2%) |

Ranking the Continents by percentage of Christians:

| 1900 | 2000 | Change +/- |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| N. AMERICA 96.6% | LAT. AMERICA 92.7% | L. AM. - 2.5% |
| LAT. AMERICA 95.2% | N. AMERICA 84.2 | N. AM. -11.0% |
| EUROPE 94.5% | OCEANIC 82.6% | OCEAN + 5.1% |
| OCEANIC 77.5% | EUROPE 76.8% | EUROP -20.7% |
| AFRICA 9.2% | AFRICA 45.6% | AFRICA +36.4% |
| ASIA 2.3% | ASIA 8.5% | ASIA +62% |

¹ This figure includes Marginals, and double-memberships.

² Protestant figures include Independents and Anglicans.

³ World Christian Encyclopedia, v.1, p. 13.

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REFLECTIONS ON A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA

"A History of Christianity in Asia". That's 2000 years in 20 minutes, a hundred years a minute, and it means running too fast for a retired professor, but I'll give it a try..

I'll begin with a question. Fifty years ago at Yale one day the professor of homiletics, met the professor of church history, Roland Bainton. He stopped to talk, and asked him, "Roley, how can you know so much about church history and still be a Christian?" The question haunts me still. I never found out how Bainton answered. But as a first answer I'd suggest: read church history as a whole, both the good and the bad, and with an open Bible, for that is just how the Bible records the history of the Chosen People. The Old Testament is as full of bad kings and false prophets in Israel as of good kings and true prophets. And in the New Testament the disciples were never perfect, and one of them was the traitor who betrayed Jesus. We don't give up our Christian faith because some Christians sins, we believe because Jesus, who was sinless, is our Saviour.

Reading church history in the same way--both the good things Christians do, and the bad things, both the successes and the failures--keeps me from giving up on Chistian missions as a failure. At one end of Asia, in Muslim Turkey, the number of Christians drops from 22% to two one-tenths of a percent in just the hundred years since 1900, and I am tempted to say "failure". But then at the other end of Asia, in Korea, I read about a Korean Christian President getting the Nobel Prize for peace, and I realize how much the Christian faith has done for Korea. Even when Korean Presbyterians split into 99 Presbyterian denominations, I don't give up. I just remember that Korean Presbyterians outgrow all the other Korean denominations, and thank the Lord for their zeal and faithfulness.

Reading the Bible while I read church history I find a higher standard than the human in history. I find that God is the Lord of all history, and then the more church history I read, the more firmly Christian I remain.

Let me illustrate this, since time is short, from the story of four missionaries to Asia. They were not the greatest, not the best known. They all made mistakes. But with all their faults, what they did for Asia strengthens my faith, not destroy it. I've chosen one (underlined below) from each of the four great overlapping periods of Christianity in Asia:

1. The apostolic period (beginnings to 450 AD): St. Thomas to the Council of Chalcedon.
2. The Nestorian period (400 to 1300); Nestorius (5th c.) and Alopen the Persian (7th c.), to Sorkaktani and Kublai Khan (13th c.).
3. The Catholic period (1200 to 1800); Xavier and Matthew Ricci, the Jesuits (16th c.).
4. The Protestant period (1800 to 1920). William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Robert Morrison, and--please forgive me, I'll be talking about my father, Samuel Austin Moffett.

First, Thomas. It is a mystery to me how Doubting Thomas, the most unlikely of all the disciples to make good as a missionary, became St. Thomas, "the Apostle to Asia". His record in the Bible is bad enough. He contradicted Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand. He rudely tried to keep Jesus from going to Jerusalem and when Jesus went to Jerusalem against his advice, Thomas predicted the end of the mission, the end of everything--"All right", he said, "let's all go and die with Him". He even refused to believe in the resurrection without the kind of proof we later Christians have never been given. And that's about all we know about him in the Bible.

Outside the Bible, St. Thomas is even worse. According to an ancient apocryphal 3rd c. document, the Acts of Thomas, the apostles meet to decide which part of world they should go to in obedience to Jesus' command. They threw lots, as in the Bible they had chosen a successor to Judas. The lot for Thomas was India. And Thomas, being Thomas, said, "I won't go." Jesus has to appear in a vision, but Thomas still says, "No". The rest of the story is too long and complicated to tell. In the end he does go, but only after Jesus gives him as a slave to an agent of King Gundaphar of India, and Thomas, says "Thy will be done". He not only went; he converted the King, Gundaphar.

The story is apocryphal. It's with fantasy and unbelievable miracles. It's no surprise that historians have been hard on it. They acidly pointed out

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Just how the missionaries were allowed to come back is almost unbelievable. Here I'll have to slip in another name, not a missionary name, not by any means. He was Genghis Khan. If Thomas the doubter is hard to justify as a proper missionary, how much more difficult it is to imagine the terror of the world, Genghis Khan, as an agent of God. But God moves in mysterious ways. The Great Khan was trying to unify the fighting tribes of Mongolia into a force to conquer the world. He found that the simplest way would be to marry, or have his sons marry the daughters of their chiefs.

He married his fourth son, Tolui, to Sorkaktani, daughter of the chief of the Keraites, and by the grace of God, Sorkaktani was a Christian. The

Keraits of Central Asia had been converted by Nestorians around the year 1000 and had been Christians for 200 years. And Sorkaktani, the princess royal, gave birth to three sons, each one of whom became an emperor. Hulagu became emperor of Persia. Mangu became emperor (Kakhan) of Mongolia. The third son is best known of all, Kublai Khan, who became Emperor of China.

It was an historic breakthrough. Europe had produced the first Christian emperor, Constantine, and Europe became Christian. Now Asia would have three emperors, three Constantines, and surely Asia would become Christian. But it didn't happen. Not one of Sorkaktani's three sons became Christian. Persia remained Muslim; Mongolia remained largely animist; and Kublai Khan, though for his Christian mother's sake he asked the Pope to send more missionaries, he eventually leaned toward Buddhism.

The lesson for mission here is: Don't depend on a Constantine. It's only when the missionary is in God's hands, not the emperor's, that he or she is anything but another liability. And never give up. Just read some more history.

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To look more religiously Chinese, he had the Jesuits wear Buddhist robes. When he discovered that the Confucian elite despised Buddhist priests he change to look like Confucian scholars. And when the scholars still looked down on them for the way they spoke Chinese so poorly, he insisted on more thorough language study. Then he challenged the scholars. He said, "You say we don't know your language and your classics. How well do you know them yourselves?", and he picked up a famous text, "Can you repeat this from memory?" They laughed. "Of course". Then he said, "Can you repeat it

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Building on that success, Ricci was able to take the gospel to the very heart of the empire, to the emperor himself. But in the end, it was Jesuit success in adapting the faith that a century or so later led to their downfall. They adapted too far. It won for them the emperor's ear, but it lost them the confidence of their own highest authority, the Pope. They were accused of spending too much time adapting, and too little evangelizing. Most questionable of all was the advice they were reportedly giving to their converts about Confucian ceremonies and ancestor worship: Go to the ceremonies like all good Chinese, but conceal a crucifix in your robes, and secretly, in your hearts, worship the true God.

In the "Rites Controversy that followed, the Pope ruled against the Jesuits, and they turned for help to the friendly Chinese emperor. "Tell the pope that the ceremonies aren't really religious", and Kang Hsi was happy to take their side of the argument. It was a costly mistake. They were caught in a trap Pope and Emperor. The Pope demanded obedience or dismissal. The emperor was furious at a foreign ruler arrogantly interfering in the internal affairs of his own empire. The end result was that all the missionaries were ordered out of China.

Who was right? Pope or Jesuits?. I think the Pope was the better theologian, but he lost his best missionary society. And the Jesuits were the better theologians. But they made the mistake of shading the truth for the sake of better communication, and in so doing lost their chance to keep communicating. The only real winner was the emperor.

The lesson for missions is this: adaptation has limits, and the end does not justify the means.

4. Samuel A. Moffett, Korea (19th and 20th c.) The last lesson is from Korea and it is a balance to the "Rites Controversy". It comes in two parts. First, adaptation has limits, but without adaptation mission doesn't start. And second, adaptation makes for a good start but without evangelism it

never reaches its goal.

My father would not be happy with me for using him as the example in this period. He would rightly object that I'm giving him credit that belongs to the whole team. But I'm biased, and he deserves it. The first surges of mass conversions occurred in his territory. He founded the first Protestant seminary. He was the first Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. That was in 1907, but very significantly, 17 years earlier in 1890, he had been one of seven young men just beginning Protestant work in Korea, who met to adopt a missionary policy, that for next 100 years shaped an unparalleled explosion of church growth in Asia. In 1890 there were about 250 Protestant church members in Korea, in 1950 600,000; in 2000 12,000,000 (some say 15,000,000).

Their policy, like Ricci's was adaptation, but with a difference. They started with the Bible, not clothes. Lamin Sanneh says that the difference between imperialists and missionaries is that imperialists make the people learn their foreign language; the missionaries learn the people's language. The difference in Korea between Catholics and the Protestants was that Catholics translated the missal, the liturgy; the Protestants translated the Bible. In Korea, it was done even before they entered Korea, and it made all the difference, even though the translation was far from perfect. Anglicans and Presbyterians came to Korea almost at the same time. The Anglicans, fearing to bring ridicule on their efforts, decided not to evangelize until they had learned to speak and write Korean perfectly. The Presbyterians took the imperfect Korean Bible, and went out preaching. They butchered the language; but today there are less than 100,000 Anglicans in Korea but more than 6 million Presbyterians, some say 9 million.

They adapted in other ways too, but cautiously. They used a Korean word for God, but were careful to find one that was being worshiped and had no shrines. They were not afraid to find truths and good points in Korea's traditional religions. Like the Confucianists they too taught righteousness and the importance of education. My father's motto was "Every time I plant a church, I want to start a school next to it." Like the Buddhists, the Protestants taught purity and the promise of a future life. They were not so inflexible as to deny these parallels with the old religious culture, but in worship and doctrine they drew clear distinctions and demanded separation.

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But that's not why I'm a Christian. Let me close by returning to the question I started with: Why am I a Christian after so much church history? I'm a Christian not because of the history, not even the mission history. The Christian world mission has three centers: a moveable center, and a replaceable center and an immoveable center. The moveable center is the historically dominant sending base. In the last 2000 years the moveable center has shifted progressively from Asia, to Europe, to England, to North America, and I seriously think the next move will be back home to Asia. The replaceable center is the missionary. We're replaced every generation anyway in a sense, and I think my example for the the next, the fourth period of Christianity in Asia (from 2000 to whatever) may well not be a Tom , Dick or Harry, a westerner, but an Asian, perhaps a Pak, Kim, or Lee--or a Mrs. Pak, Kim or Lee. The next period in mission may well be the Asian period. Asian is the home of the most mission active churches in the world.

That kind of church history, though, however wonderful have been the great accomplishments of it moveable, replaceable centers, is not the reason why I am still a Christian. I am a Christian because of the immoveable center. The eternal, immeasurable, immoveable, irreplaceable center is Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Mission, Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and forever", the only "Saviour of the World". He is my Lord, and I am His missionary.

- Samuel Hugh Moffett

moffett. asiarefl. lec

REFLECTIONS ON A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA

"A History of Christianity in Asia". That's 2000 years in 20 minutes, a hundred years a minute, and it means running too fast for a retired professor, but I'll give it a try..

I'll begin with a question. Fifty years ago at Yale one day the professor of homiletics, met the professor of church history, Roland Bainton. He stopped to talk, and asked him, "Roley, how can you know so much about church history and still be a Christian?" The question haunts me still. I never found out how Bainton answered. But as a first answer I'd suggest: read church history as a whole, both the good and the bad, and with an open Bible, for that is just how the Bible records the history of the Chosen People. The Old Testament is as full of bad kings and false prophets in Israel as of good kings and true prophets. And in the New Testament the disciples were never perfect, and one of them was the traitor who betrayed Jesus. We don't give up our Christian faith because some Christians sins, we believe because Jesus, who was sinless, is our Saviour.

Reading church history in the same way--both the good things Christians do, and the bad things, both the successes and the failures--keeps me from giving up on Chistian missions as a failure. At one end of Asia, in Muslim Turkey, the number of Christians drops from 22% to two one-tenths of a percent in just the hundred years since 1900, and I am tempted to say "failure". But then at the other end of Asia, in Korea, I read about a Korean Christian President getting the Nobel Prize for peace, and I realize how much the Christian faith has done for Korea. Even when Korean Presbyterians split into 99 Presbyterian denominations, I don't give up. I just remember that Korean Presbyterians outgrow all the other Korean denominations, and thank the Lord for their zeal and faithfulness.

Reading the Bible while I read church history I find a higher standard than the human in history. I find that God is the Lord of all history, and then the more church history I read, the more firmly Christian I remain.

Let me illustrate this, since time is short, from the story of four missionaries to Asia. They were not the greatest, not the best known. They all made mistakes. But with all their faults, what they did for Asia strengthens my faith, not destroy it. I've chosen one (underlined below) from each of the four great overlapping periods of Christianity in Asia:

1. The apostolic period (beginnings to 450 AD): St. Thomas to the Council of Chalcedon.
2. The Nestorian period (400 to 1300); Nestorius (5th c.) and Alopen the Persian (7th c.), to Sorkaktani and Kublai Khan (13th c.).
3. The Catholic period (1200 to 1800); Xavier and Matthew Ricci, the Jesuits (16th c.).
4. The Protestant period (1800 to 1920). William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Robert Morrison, and--please forgive me, I'll be talking about my father, Samuel Austin Moffett.

First, Thomas. It is a mystery to me how Doubting Thomas, the most unlikely of all the disciples to make good as a missionary, became St. Thomas, "the Apostle to Asia". His record in the Bible is bad enough. He contradicted Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand. He rudely tried to keep Jesus from going to Jerusalem and when Jesus went to Jerusalem against his advice, Thomas predicted the end of the mission, the end of everything--"All right", he said, "let's all go and die with Him". He even refused to believe in the resurrection without the kind of proof we later Christians have never been given. And that's about all we know about him in the Bible.

Outside the Bible, St. Thomas is even worse. According to an ancient apocryphal 3rd c. document, the Acts of Thomas, the apostles meet to decide which part of world they should go to in obedience to Jesus' command. They threw lots, as in the Bible they had chosen a successor to Judas. The lot for Thomas was India. And Thomas, being Thomas, said, "I won't go." Jesus has to appear in a vision, but Thomas still says, "No". The rest of the story is too long and complicated to tell. In the end he does go, but only after Jesus gives him as a slave to an agent of King Gundaphar of India, and Thomas, says "Thy will be done". He not only went; he converted the King, Gundaphar.

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4 MAJOR OVERLAPPING PERIODS OF ASIAN CHURCH HISTORY

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4. The Protestant period (1800-1920). William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Robert Morrison, and -- please forgive me--Samuel Austin Moffett.

CHRONOLOGY OF ASIAN CHURCH HISTORY

- 50 Traditional date of Thomas's landing in India.
- 70 Traditional date of Addai's mission to Edessa, Osrhoene.

- 201 First record of a Christian church building in Edessa.
- 270 First priest ordained in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Persia.

- 301 First Christian king, Tiridates of Armenia.
- 311 Conversion of Constantine the Great, Rome.
- 325 Thomas of Cana is credited with bringing East Syrian Christianity to India.
- 340-400 The Great Persecution in Persia.

- 451 The Council of Chalcedon and the Great Schism. Nestorius dies.
- 486 The Church of the East separates from Rome and Constantinople as a "Nestorian" or Syrian church.

- 621 Muhammad and the beginning of the Muslim Conquest, West Asia.
- 635 Alopen, first recorded missionary to China, reaches Changan (Xian).
- 907 Tang Dynasty (618-907) falls; Nestorian Christianity disappears in China.
- 1000 Nestorian missionaries convert the Kerait Mongols in Central Asia.

- 1200-1368 The "Pax Mongolica":
 - Genghis Khan marries his son Tolui to the Kerait princess Sorkaktani
 - Sorkaktani's three sons become emperors in Asia: Hulagu emperor of Persia (r. 1258-1265), Arghun Great Khan of Mongolia (r. 1284-1291), and Kublai Khan emperor of China (r. 1260-1294).
 - The Franciscans, John of Plano Carpini and Lawrence of Portugal, first Catholics in Mongolia (1245).
 - The Polos at the court of Kublai Khan (1266-1292).

- The Franciscan John of Montecorvino, first Catholic to reach China proper (1294); Primate of all the Far East (1307).
- 1295-1304 Central Asia turns Muslim.
- 1362-1405 Timur the Great (Tamerlane) destroys Christianity in Asia.
- 1502 Vasco da Gama brings Portuguese Roman Catholicism to dominate India's Syrian Christianity.
- 1521 Magellan celebrates Easter Mass in the Philippines.
- 1546 Portuguese establish a Catholic mission in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- 1549 Francis Xavier establishes the Catholic faith in Japan.
- 1549-1614 "The Christian Century" in Japan.
- 1582 Matthew Ricci reaches Macao; enters China 1583; Peking 1599.
- 1592 DeCespedes (Jesuit), chaplain to Japanese troops, Korea.
- 1601 The first successful Protestant foreign mission: the Dutch in Indonesia.
- 1614 The shogun Ieyasu's anti-Christian edict decisively outlaws Christianity in Japan.
- 1636-1742 The Rites Controversy in China.
- 1708 The Danish/Halle (Lutheran) mission to India.
- 1720-1850 Catholic divisions and decline.
- 1773 The dissolution of the Jesuit Order.
- 1784 Lee Seung-Hun establishes a Catholic beachhead in Korea.
- 1792 William Carey (Baptist) lands in India.
- 1807 Robert Morrison (London Missionary Society), first resident Protestant missionary in China.
- 1813 Adoniram and Ann Judson (Baptists) begin work in Burma.
- 1826 First Protestant missionaries enter Siam (Thailand).
- 1833 First mission to the Bataks of Sumatra, Indonesia.
- 1834 Protestants establish a mission to Nestorians on Turkish/Persian border.
- 1834-1860 The Opium Wars in China.
- 1851-1864 Hung Hsiu-Ch'uan (a marginal Christian) and the Taiping Rebellion in China.
- 1853 Perry opens Japan to the west; first Protestant service in Japan.
- 1857-1900 Intermittent mass movements of dalits ("outcastes") in India, mainly Protestant.
- 1859 Catholic missionaries reenter Japan; 1865 hidden Christians reappear. First resident Protestant missionaries arrive.
- 1866 Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission.
- 1884 Beginnings of Protestant missions to Korea.
- 1899-1901 The Boxer Rebellion in China.

ASIA STATISTICS
(from World Christian Encyclopedia, 2000)

| | <u>1900</u> | <u>2000</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Asia Population | 956,196,000 (100%) | 3,696,958,087 (100%) |
| Asia Christians | 21,897,500 (2.3%) | 312,849,400 (8.5%) ¹ |
| [Roman Cath. | 11,162,800 (1.2%) | 110,480,000 (3.0) |
| Protestant ² | 4,531,500 (0.5%) | 209,428,700 (21.8%) |
| Orthodox | 6,864,200 (0.7%) | 14,113,500 (0.4%)] |
| Non-Christian Asia | | |
| Muslim | 156,139,600 (16.3%) | 832,878,900 (22.5%) |
| Hindu | 202,546,700 (21.2%) | 805,119,900 (21.8%) |
| Non-rel. | 47,000 (0%) | 608,594,400 (16.5%) |
| [Christian | 21,897,500 (2.3% | 312,849,400 (8.5%)] |
| China flk | 379,914,700 (39.7%) | 383,407,700 (10.4%) |
| Buddhist | 126,618,500 (13.2%) | 354,354,700 (9.6%) |
| Anim/Shama | 50,564,000 (5.3%) | 128,295,500 (3.5%) ³ |

| | <u>1900</u> | <u>2000</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| World Population | 1,619,626,000 (100) | 6,055,049,000 |
| World Religions | | |
| Christians | 558,132,000 (34.5%) | 1,100,563,800 (33.0%) |
| Muslims | 199,940,900 (12.3%) | 1,188,242,800 (19.6%) |
| Hindus | 203,003,440 (12.5%) | 811,336,300 (13.4%) |
| Non-Relig. | 3,023,600 (0.2%) | 768,159,000 (12.7%) |
| China Folk Relig. | 380,006,000 (23.5%) | 384,806,700 (6.4%) |
| Buddhist | 127,176,800 (7.8%) | 359,981,800 (5.9%) |
| New Religionist | 5,910,000 (0.0%) | 102,356,000 (1.0%). |
| Animist/Shaman | 117,558,400 (7.3%) | 228,366,500 (3.4%) |
| Sikhs | 2,962,000 (0.0%) | 23,258,000 (0.0%) |
| Jews | 12,292,000 (0.8%) | 14,434,000 (0.2%) |
| Non-Christians | 1,061,494,000 (65.5%) | 4,055,485,000 (67.0%) |

¹ This figure includes Marginals, and double-memberships.

² Protestant figures include Independents and Anglicans.

³ World Christian Encyclopedia, v.1, p. 13.

Continents by percentage of Christians:

| <u>1900</u> | | <u>2000</u> | <u>Change +/-</u> |
|---------------|-------|---------------|-------------------|
| North America | 96.6% | Latin America | 92.7% [- 2.5%] |
| Latin America | 92.5% | North America | 84.5% [- 11.0%] |
| Europe | 94.5% | Oceania | 82.6% + 5.1% |
| Oceania | 77.5% | Europe | 76.5% [- 20.7%] |
| Africa | 9.2% | Africa | 45.6% + 36.4% |
| Asia | 2.3% | Asia | 8.5% + 6.2% |

In some ways Moffett thought he might be ill-fitted to be a missionary. He was a science major, and did so poorly in Hebrew at seminary that, knowing how important learning the language is in foreign missions, he wondered whether he should apply. But he felt the call, and decided to let the Lord test him. He accepted a call to a small church in Missouri, and promised the Lord that if after one year the church asked him to stay, he would take that as a sign that he would make a satisfactory missionary, and would go overseas.

They called him to stay, and he went to Korea. But in Korea, the tiny handful already there took one look at him, tall and very thin, and said to the Board, "We're afraid he won't survive here very long". He almost didn't survive. He was stoned in the street when he tried to open up Christian work in the north. Six times in one year he was driven out of Pyengyang, the city which is now the capital of North Korea.

But he surprised everybody. He lived for 46 more years and outlived them all. He lived to see the faith he preached transform a nation. He lived to see Pyengyang transformed. When he came, it was called the wickedest city in all Korea, famous for tiger hunters, and child prostitutes. When he left, 46 years later, people in the countryside called it Yerusalem, because they thought a Christian city should be called by the name of the mother of Christian cities. The first great mass movements into the Christian church began there. For a while Pyengyang became the largest Presbyterian mission station in the world. People would come from America to ask father the secret of the church growth explosion. He could have given them many answers, but what he said was usually too simple for them. He would say that the reason the church had grown was this: "For fifty years we have lifted up before these people the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit did the rest."

But I could almost say it in one word still, not Pyengyang, but Seoul--Seoul in South Korea. Pete Wagner, here at Fuller visited Korea some years ago and came back somewhat in shock. He said, "Presbyterian began in England with John Wesley, but the largest Methodist congregation in the world is not in England, but in Seoul, Korea. Methodists began in Switzerland with John Calvin, but the largest Presbyterian congregation in the world is not in Switzerland but in Seoul, Korea. And Pentecostalism in its modern form started in Southern California, but the largest Pentecostal congregation in the world is in Seoul, Korea.

moffett. asiarefl. lec

REFLECTIONS ON A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA

"A History of Christianity in Asia". That's 2000 years in 20 minutes, a hundred years a minute, but I'll give it a try.

I'll begin with a memory. Fifty years ago at Yale one day the professor of homiletics met the professor of church history, Roland Bainton. He stopped to talk, and asked him, "Roley, how can you know so much about church history and still be a Christian?" The question haunts me still. I never found out how Bainton answered it. One suggestion I might make would be to try to read church history as a whole, both the encouraging parts and the shameful parts. And I would read it with an open Bible in hand, for that is exactly the way the Bible tells the story of God's people.

Reading history that way, as a whole--both the good things Christians do, and the bad things, both the successes and the failures--keeps me from giving up on missions. When at one end of Asia, in Muslim Turkey, the number of Christians drops from 22% to two-tenths of a percent in just the hundred years since 1900, I don't abandon hope. And at the other end of Asia, in Korea, when a Korean Christian gets the Nobel Prize for peace, I don't begin to think that the New Jerusalem is here and say that we don't need missionaries any more. On the other hand, when Korean Presbyterians split into 99 separate denominations and I am tempted to leave the church in despair, all I need to do is look at the same Presbyterians outgrowing all other Christian bodies, both Catholic and Protestant, and I manage to keep my balance.

As for reading history with an open Bible, that is my check on a higher reality than human history. Then, the more I know about the history of Christianity in Asia, the more firmly Christian I remain.

Since time is short, let me illustrate this from the stories of four missionaries to Asia. They were not the greatest, not the best known. They all made mistakes. But with all their faults, what they did for Asia strengthens my faith; it does not destroy it. I've chosen one from each of the

four great overlapping periods of Christianity in Asia:

1. The apostolic period (beginnings to 300 AD)--St. Thomas.
2. The Nestorian period (400 to 1300) -- Alopen, the Persian.
3. The Catholic period (1200 to 1800) -- Matthew Ricci, the Jesuit.
4. The Protestant period (1800 to 1930). Here, please forgive me, I'll be talking about my father, Samuel A. Moffett.

First, Thomas. It is a mystery to me how Doubting Thomas, the most unlikely of all the disciples to make good as a missionary, became St. Thomas, "the Apostle to Asia". His record in the Bible is bad enough. He contradicted Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand. He rudely tried to keep Jesus from going to Jerusalem and when he went anyway, he predicted the end of the mission--"All right", he said, "let's all go and die with Him". He even refused to believe in the resurrection without the kind of proof we later Christians have never been given. And that's about all we know about him in the Bible.

Outside the Bible, he is even worse. According to an ancient 3rd century document, the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, after the resurrection the apostles met to decide which part of the world they should go to in obedience to Jesus' command, "Go ye into all the world". They threw lots, as we read in the Bible they had done to choose a successor to Judas (Acts 1:22-26). The lot for Thomas was India. And Thomas, being Thomas, said, "I won't go." They asked Jesus to appeal to him in a vision, but Thomas still said, "No". The rest of the story is too long and complicated to tell. In the end he does go, but only after Jesus gives him as a slave to an agent of King Gundaphar of India, and Thomas is so angry that he storms off and can't go to sleep all night. But in the morning, at last he says "Thy will be done". He not only went to India; he converted the King, Gundaphar.

The story is apocryphal. It's packed with fantasy and unbelievable miracles. It's not surprising that historians have been hard on it. They acidly pointed out that India never had a king Gundaphar. But two points in it at least sound authentic. About a hundred years or so ago, an explorer on the Afghan border turned up a cache of old coins buried in the ruins of an ancient temple. He sent some to the British museum to identify. Their unexpected reply was: These are coins from the first century; they carry the stamped image of a king, and the name on the coins is Gundaphar. Well, a Gundaphar in Indian history doesn't prove a Thomas, but at least historians

treat the tradition now with respect.

I think there is another kernel of truth in the tradition. It reinforces the oldest missionary truth of all: that it takes more than belief to make a missionary. Thomas already believed. He didn't become a missionary until he obeyed.

2. Alopen (7th century China). Alopen was a Persian Nestorian, neither Catholic nor Eastern Orthodox. Nestorians have sometimes been called "the Protestants of Asia". He was the first known Christian missionary to reach China. Not many western Christians remember that Christians were in China only about 70 years after Columba brought the gospel from Ireland to our barbarian ancestors in Scotland. But unlike the Irish mission to Scotland, in China that early Nestorian mission failed. It was wiped out about 900 AD and the Christians simply disappeared.

As it turned out, however, Alopen had not really failed. All along the Old Silk Road in Central Asia his Nestorians had planted the seed and along that road, 300 years later, the gospel came again to China. Just how the Nestorian missionaries were allowed to come back is almost unbelievable. Here I'll have to slip in another name, not a missionary name, not by any means. The name was Genghis Khan. If Thomas the doubter is hard to justify as a proper missionary, how much more difficult it is to imagine the terror of the world, Genghis Khan, as an agent of God. But God moves in mysterious ways. The Great Khan was trying to unify the fighting tribes of Mongolia into a force to conquer the world. He found that the simplest way would be to marry, or have his sons marry the daughters of their chiefs.

He married his fourth son, Tolui, to Sorkaktani, daughter of the chief of the Keraites, and by the grace of God, Sorkaktani was a Christian. The Keraites of Central Asia had been converted by Nestorians around the year 1000 and had been Christians for 200 years. And Sorkaktani, a royal princess, gave birth to three sons, each one of whom became an emperor. Hulagu became emperor of Persia. Mangu became emperor (Kakhan) of Mongolia. The third son is the best known of all three, Kublai Khan, who became Emperor of China.

It was an historic breakthrough. Europe had produced the first Christian emperor, Constantine, and Europe became Christian. Now Asia, it seemed, might have three emperors, three Constantines, and surely Asia would become Christian. But it didn't happen. Not one of Sorkaktani's three sons became a Christian. Persia remained Muslim; Mongolia remained largely animist; and Kublai Khan, though he asked the Pope to send Catholic missionaries to China, eventually leaned toward Buddhism.

The lesson for mission here is: Don't depend on a Constantine. It's only when the missionary is in God's hands, not the emperor's, that he or she can expect to be effective. Even when the state is hostile God is at work.

3. Matthew Ricci, and the Jesuits in China (16th-18th c. About 250 years later the Christians came back again. This time they were Catholics. Their leader, Matthew Ricci, was not the most famous Jesuit, but he headed their most famous Mission, the Jesuit Mission in Peking.

Ricci was the pioneer of a primary Catholic missionary policy, adaptation. Protestants generally call it indigenizing, or contextualizing, or enculturating the communication of the Christian faith across cultural boundaries. It was amazingly successful, for Ricci was a skillful adapter.

To look more religiously Chinese, he had the Jesuits wear Buddhist robes. When he discovered that the Confucian elite despised Buddhist priests he changed their robes to look like Confucian scholars. And when the scholars still looked down on them for the way they spoke Chinese so poorly, he insisted on more thorough language study. Then he challenged the scholars. He said, "You say we don't know your language and your classics. How well do you know them yourselves?", and he picked up a famous text, "Can you repeat this from memory?" They laughed. "Of course". Then he said, "Can you repeat it backwards"? And again they laughed, "No one can do that". But Ricci said, "I can", and he did. From that time on, few dared to accuse the Jesuits of ignorance.

Building on that success, Ricci was able to take the gospel to the very heart of the empire, to the emperor himself. But in the end, it was Jesuit success in adapting the faith, that a century or so later led to their downfall.

They adapted too far. It won for them the emperor's ear, but it lost them the confidence of their own highest authority, the Pope. They were accused of spending too much time adapting, and too little evangelizing. Most questionable of all was the advice they were reportedly giving to their converts about Confucian ceremonies and ancestor worship: Go to the ceremonies like all good Chinese, but conceal a crucifix in your robes, and secretly, in your hearts, worship the true God.

In the "Rites Controversy" that followed, the Pope ruled against the Jesuits, and they turned for help to the friendly Chinese emperor. "Tell the pope that the ceremonies aren't really religious", and Kang Hsi was happy to take their side of the argument. It was a costly mistake. The Jesuits were caught in a trap between Pope and Emperor. The Pope demanded obedience or dismissal. The emperor was furious at a foreign ruler arrogantly interfering in the internal affairs of his own empire. The end result was that all the missionaries were ordered out of China. The only obvious winner was the emperor, except that the Bible reminds us, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Matt 16:26).

Who was right? Pope or Jesuits?. I think the Pope was the better theologian, but the Jesuits were better missionaries. Their great mistake was to shade the truth for the sake of better accommodation with Chinese culture, and the lesson for missions is this: adaptation has limits, and the end does not justify the means.

4. Samuel A. Moffett, Korea (19th and 20th c.) The last lesson is from Korea and it is a balance to the "Rites Controversy". It comes in two parts. First, adaptation has limits, but without adaptation mission doesn't start. And second, adaptation makes for a good start but without evangelism it never reaches its goal.

My father would not be happy with me for using him as the example in this period. He would rightly object that I'm giving him credit that belongs to the whole team. But he was the leader of a team in what is now North Korea which witnessed startling surges of massive conversions. Built upon widespread itineration, church planting and Bible training classes, he founded the first Protestant seminary in Korea. He was the first

Moderator elected by the newly constituted Presbyterian Church of Korea in 1907. But very significantly, 17 years earlier in 1890, he had been one of seven young Presbyterians just beginning Protestant work in Korea, who met to adopt a missionary policy that for the next 100 years shaped an explosion of church growth which has no other parallel in Asia. In 1890 there were about 250 Protestant church members in Korea. In 1950, 600,000; in the year 2000, 12,000,000 (some say 15,000,000).

The Korea policy is called the "Nevius Method", named after the Presbyterian missionary from China who came to counsel with the seven in Seoul. It was a variation of Ricci's 16th century principle of "adaptation", but with a difference. In Korea the missionaries started with the Bible, not clothing. Like Ricci, the Korea missionaries knew they had to learn the language, a counter-imperialist move, for as Lamin Sanneh has written, the difference between imperialists and missionaries is that imperialists make the people learn their foreign language; the missionaries learn the people's language. In Korea a further difference was important. The Catholics translated their missal, the liturgy, into Korean; the Protestants translated the Bible. Most of the New Testament had been translated and circulated even before their missionaries were able to enter Korea. Neither the spoken Korean of the missionaries, nor the translation of the Korean New Testament was perfect, far from it. But they trusted God and used what they had. But there were differences among them. Anglicans and Presbyterians came to Korea almost at the same time. The Anglicans, fearing to bring ridicule on their efforts, decided not to evangelize until they had learned to speak and write Korean perfectly. The Presbyterians took the less than perfect translation of the Korean Bible and went out preaching. They sometimes butchered the language; but today there are less than 100,000 Anglicans in Korea and more than 6 million Presbyterians, some say 9 million.

They adapted in other ways too, but cautiously. They used a Korean word for God, but not one that was used in the temples. Like the Confucianists they taught righteousness and the importance of education. My father's motto was "Every time a church is planted, we should start a school next to it." Like Korean Buddhists, the Protestants offered promise of a future life. Like Shamanists they believed in a spiritual world beyond the material. They were not so inflexible as to deny parallels with the old religious culture, but in worship and doctrine they drew clear distinctions and

demanded separation. The parallels were bridges for evangelism; the differences, once made clear, came as good news and began to transform the culture.

But that's not why I'm a Christian. Let me close by returning to the question I started with: How can I be a Christian after reading so much about Christian mistakes in the history of the church?. I'm a Christian not because of the history, but because of the Lord of all history. The Christian world mission has three centers: a moveable center, a replaceable center and an immovable center. The moveable center is the historically dominant sending base. In the last 2000 years the moveable center has shifted progressively from Asia, to the continent of Europe, to England, to North America, and I seriously think the next move will be back home to Asia. The replaceable center is the missionary. We're replaced every generation. Judging from what appears to be the trend in Christian mission here at the beginning of a new millennium, it appears to me than any examples I might pick about mission in the next few centuries will not have names like Ricci, or Carey, or Taylor or Moffett, but that we'll be back where we started with names from Asia; Thomas, or Alopen, and now perhaps a Kim or Park or Lee, or a Yamamoto, or an Inayat; or names from Africa and Latin America.

But a missionary example, even the best, is not why I am still a Christian. I am a Christian because of the immovable center of history, Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday today and forever", the only "Saviour of the world".

And I believe that is just what Roland Bainton might have said to the homiletics professor that day at Yale fifty-five years ago.

- Samuel Hugh Moffett
Princeton/Pasadena, 2000

Note: For my sources, see the text and footnotes in A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume 1, 2nd ed. (Orbis Books, 1998). On Thomas, chapter 2, pp. 25-44. On Alopen, chapter 15, pp. 287-323. On Sorkaktani and the Mongols, 400-405, 422-469. On Ricci, vol. 2 (in process of publication), chapter 5. On Moffett, vol. 2, chapter 24. [chapter numbers in vol. 2 may change].

OUTLINE: HISTORY OF ASIAN CHRISTIANITY

- Samuel H. Moffett

- I. Christianity reaches India, 50 AD (?). Thomas, Gundaphar.
- II. It breaks out of the Roman Empire into Syria, 70 AD (?). Encounters gnosticism, paganism. Addai, Abgar VIII, Bardaisan.
- III. It enters Persia, 200-640 AD. Encounters Zoroastrianism. Aggai, persecution, Yazdegard I and toleration. Synod of Dadyeshu and independence (424); Nestorius and schism (486, 497 AD).
- IV. Persian missionaries enter China, 635-907 AD. Christianity encounters Buddhism, Confucianism. Alopen, Nestorian Monument (781 AD). Fall of T'ang dynasty. Christianity disappears in China (907-1200 AD).
- V. Muhammad and the Muslim Conquest (622-1000 AD). Christianity encounters Islam.
- VI. The Mongols and the Pax Mongolica, (1200-1368). Christianity encounter Shamanism. Genghis Khan, Princess Sorkaktani, Mongke Khan of Mongolia, Kublai Khan of China, Hulegu Ilkhan of Persia. Reentry of Nestorianism into China, and Roman Catholicism into Mongolia and China. John of Montcorvino.
- VII. The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia (1368-1500). Tamerlane. Eight reasons for the decline: geographical isolation, numerical weakness, persecution, encounter with other Asian religions, ethnic intraoersion, dependence upon the state, internal schisms, and theological syncretism.
- IX. The Return of the West to Asia (1500-1800). Encounter with Asian religions, western colonialism, commercialism, and national resistance. Confucianism, Buddhism, Shamanism. Catholic imperialism (Portuguese and Spanish) 1500-1800; Protestant commercial expansion (Dutch and British) 1600-1800.
- X. The Great Century, (1792-1815). The modern missionary movement (1792-1945).
- XI. The rise of the Asian churches (1945-2000). (For this seminar, China, Korea, and perhaps Japan).

4 MAJOR OVERLAPPING PERIODS OF ASIAN CHURCH HISTORY

1. The apostolic/post-apostolic period (beginnings to 450 AD): from St Thomas the Council of Chalcedon. b
2. The Nestorian period (400 to 1300): Nestorius (5th c.) and Alopen the Persian (7th c.), to Sorkaktani and Kublai Khan (13th c.).
3. The Catholic period (1200-1800): the Jesuits, Xavier and Matthew Ricci (16th c.).
4. The Protestant period (1800-1920). William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Robert Morrison, and -- please forgive me--Samuel Austin Moffett.

CHRONOLOGY OF ASIAN CHURCH HISTORY

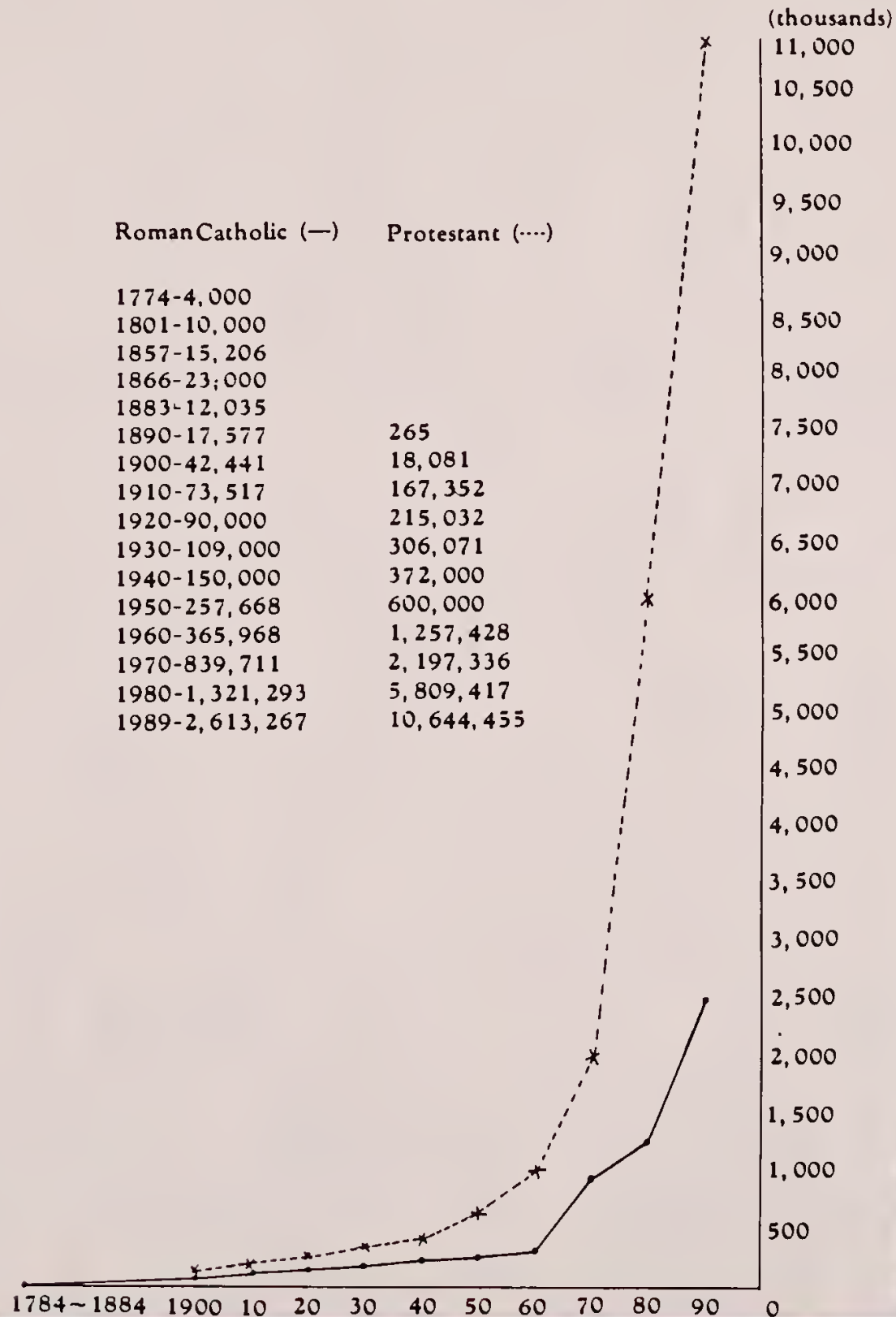
- 50 Traditional date of Thomas's landing in India.
- 70 Traditional date of Addai's mission to Edessa, Osrhoene.
- 201 First record of a Christian church building in Edessa.
- 270 First priest ordained in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Persia.
- 301 First Christian king, Tiridates of Armenia.
- 311 Conversion of Constantine the Great, Rome.
- 325 Thomas of Canna is credited with bringing East Syrian Christianity to India.
- 340-400 The Great Persecution in Persia.
- 451 The Council of Chalcedon and the Great Schism. Nestorius dies.
- 486 The Church of the East separates from Rome and Constantinople as "Nestorian" or Syrian church. a
- 621 Muhammad and the beginning of the Muslim Conquest, West Asia.
- 635 Alopen, first recorded missionary to China, reaches Changan (Xian).
- 907 Tang Dynasty (618-907) falls; Nestorian Christianity disappears in China.
- 1000 Nestorian missionaries convert the Kerait Mongols in Central Asia.
- 1200-1368 The "Pax Mongolica":
 - Genghis Khan marries his son Tolui to the Kerait princess Sorkaktani
 - Sorkaktani's three sons become emperors in Asia: Hulagu emperor of

- Persia (r. 1258-1265), Arghun Great Khan of Mongolia (r.1284-1291), and Kublai Khan emperor of China (r. 1260-1294).
- The Franciscans, John of Plano Carpini and Lawrence of Portugal, first Catholics in Mongolia (1245).
- The Polos at the court of Kublai Khan (1266-1292).
- The Franciscan John of Montecorvino, first Catholic to reach China proper (1294); Primate of all the Far East (1307).
- 1295-1304 Central Asia turns Muslim.
- 1362-1405 Timur the Great (Tamerlane) destroys Christianity in Asia.
- 1502 Vasco da Gama brings Portuguese Roman Catholicism to dominate India's Syrian Christianity.
- 1521 Magellan celebrates Easter Mass in the Philippines.
- 1546 Portuguese establish a Catholic mission in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- 1549 Francis Xavier establishes the Catholic faith in Japan.
- 1549-1614 "The Christian Century" in Japan.
- 1582 Matthew Ricci reaches Macao; enters China 1583; Peking 1599.
- 1592 DeCespedes (Jesuit), chaplain to Japanese troops, Korea.
- 1601 The first successful Protestant foreign mission: the Dutch in Indonesia.
- 1614 The shogun Ieyasu's anti-Christian edict decisively outlaws Christianity in Japan.
- 1636-1742 The Rites Controversy in China.
- 1708 The Danish/Halle (Lutheran) mission to India.
- 1720-1850 Catholic divisions and decline.
- 1773 The dissolution of the Jesuit Order.
- 1784 Lee Seung-Hun establishes a Catholic beachhead in Korea.
- 1792 William Carey (Baptist) lands in India.
- 1807 Robert Morrison (London Missionary Society), first resident Protestant missionary in China.
- 1813 Adoniram and Ann Judson (Baptists) begin work in Burma.
- 1826 First Protestant missionaries enter Siam (Thailand).
- 1833 First mission to the Bataks of Sumatra, Indonesia.
- 1834 Protestants establish a mission to Nestorians on Turkish/Persian border.
- 1834-1860 The Opium Wars in China.
- 1851-1864 Hung Hsiu-Ch'uan (a marginal Christian) and the Taiping Rebellion in China. **Rebellion**
- 1853 Perry opens Japan to the west; first Protestant service in Japan.
- 1857-1900 Intermittent mass movements of dalits ("outcastes") in India, mainly Protestant.
- 1859 Catholic missionaries reenter Japan; 1865 hidden Christians reappear. First resident Protestant missionaries arrive.

Marlin Nelson, "A Critique of Korean Church Growth (1975-1989)"

situation changes before the book is printed. However such reports can indicate trends which can be analyzed and give helpful insights for future evangelism and church growth. I want to share

Chart for Korean Church Growth (1784-1990)



S. Moffett, (ch02.95)7

ASIA STATISTICS 1995

WORLD POPULATION: 5,757,000

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| ASIA: | 3,345,000,000 | 58% of world pop. |
| EUROPE (+USSR) | 804,000,000 | 14% " |
| AFRICA | 701,000,000 | 12% " |
| LATIN AMERICA | 474,000,000 (+Carib.) | 8% " |
| NORTH AMERICA | 288,000,000 | 5% " |

- (World Almanac '95.)

WORLD RELIGIONS:

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Christians | 1,939,000,000 | 33.7% of <u>world</u> pop. |
| Muslims | 1,057,000,000 | 18.3% |
| Non-religious | 937,000,000 | 16.2% |
| Hindus | 777,000,000 | 13.4% |
| Buddhists | 341,000,000 | 5.9% |
| Atheists | 243,000,000 | 4.2% |
| New religionists | 129,000,000 | 2.2% |
| Tribal religionists | 99,000,000 | 1.7% |

- (IBMR, Jan., 1995, p.25)

CHRISTIANS BY CONTINENTS:

| | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|
| Latin America, | 89.5% | of continent's population. |
| Europe & USSR, | 77.0% | |
| North America, | 70.0% | |
| Africa | 48.1% | |
| Asia & Mideast, | 7.0% | |

Asia's Religions:

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Hindus | 747,000,000 | 22.3% | of <u>Asia's</u> pop. |
| Non-religious | 721,000,000 | 21.5% | |
| Muslims | 688,000,000 | 20.5% | |
| Buddhists | 332,000,000 | 9.9% | |
| Christians | 300.400,000 | 8.9% | |
| Atheists | 167,000,000 | 4.9% | |
| China folk religion. | 140,000,000 | 4.1% | |
| New rekigionists | 122,000,000 | 3.6% | |
| Tribal religionists | 29,000,000 | 0.8% | -(World Alm.95) |

Asia's Largest Christian populations by countries and % of pop.:

| | <u>Total pop.</u> | <u>Christians</u> | <u>% Christian</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| China | (1,214 m) | 66,000,000 | Philippines 89.0% |
| Philippines | (70 m) | 49,400,000 | Lebanon 38.4% |
| India | (905 m) | 33,600,000 | South Korea 34.4% |
| Indonesia | (195 m) | 22,400,000 | Indonesia 12.5% |
| South Korea | (45 m) | 14,200,000 | Vietnam 12.5% |
| Vietnam | (75 m) | 6,900,000 | Sri Lanka 7.6% |
| Burma | (46 m) | 2,600,000 | Malaysia 7.3% |
| Sri Lanka | (18 m.) | 1,300,000 | Burma 6.3% |
| Malaysai | (19 m) | 1,200,000 | China 6.1% |
| Lebanon | (3 m) | 1,170,00 | Taiwan 3.0% |
| Japan | (126 m) | 1,060,000 | Japan 1.6% |
| Taiwan | (22 m) | 915,000 | India 0.8% |

-- (adapted from Operation World, 1995)

moffett. asiaxnh.sum

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA: SUMMARY

Let me begin by putting that subject in its global context. The three largest religions in the world are Christianity with about 2 billion people, Islam with about 1 billion, and Modern Secularism, which claims it is non-religious, with less than 900 million. In a world of almost 6 billion people, Christians represent about a third of the population; Muslims a sixth, and the modern secularists about a seventh of all the people in the world.

But what most people do not fully realize about these and the other great religions of the world--adding Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism--is that only one of them, Modern Secularism is western, and all the rest come from Asia. If we rule out secularism as non-religious, as it claims, and tribal primitive religion as not one of the "higher religions", then all six of the world's great religions were born in Asia, including Christianity, which most people conveniently forget.

Christians by Continents, 1800 to 2000 (church members)

| | <u>1800</u> | <u>1900</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>Change*</u> |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Latin America | 15.0m | 60.0m (92.5%) | 475m (92.7%) | + 0.25 |
| North America | 5.6m | 5.6m (96.6%) | 212m (84,5%) | -11.0% |
| Oceania | 0.1m | 4.3m (77.5%) | 21m (82.6%) | + 5.1% |
| Europe | 171.0m | 368.0m (94.5%) | 537m (76.5%) | -18.0% |
| Africa | 44.3m | 8.8m (9.2%) | 335m (45.6%) | +36.4% |
| Asia | 8.4m | 20.8m (2.3%) | 307m (8.2%) | + 6.2% |

* (Change in % of Christians to population from 1900 to 2000)

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| Oceania | 0.1m | 4.3m (77.5%) | 21m (82.6%) | + 5.1% |
| Europe | 171.0m | 368.0m (94.5%) | 537m (76.5%) | -18.0% |
| Africa | 44.3m | 8.8m (9.2%) | 335m (45.6%) | +36.4% |
| Asia | 8.4m | 20.8m (2.3%) | 307m (8.2%) | + 6.2% |

* (Change in % of Christians to population from 1900 to 2000)

LARGEST PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD, 2000 A.D.

| | <u>adherents</u> | <u>%pop⁴</u> |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. China House Church Movement | 35,000,000 ⁵ (I) | 7.1% |
| 2. Assemblies of God, Brazil | 22,000,000 (P) | 91.4% |
| 3. Anglican Church, Nigeria (CMS) | 17,500,000 (A) | 45.9% |
| 4. 3 Self Church, China | 15,000,000 (U) | 7.1% |
| 5. Church of Christ, Zaire (Federation) | 9,200,000 (U) | 95.4% |
| 6. Kimbanguist Church, Zaire | 7,500,000 (I) | 95.4% |
| 7. Anglican Church, Uganda (CMS) | 7,400,000 (A) | 88.7% |
| 8. Zion Christian Church, S. Africa | 7,000,000 (P) | 83.1% |
| 9. Kale Hewet (Wd of Life), Ethiopia | 4,600,000 (I) | 57.7% |
| 10. Universal Reign of Life Church, Brazil | 4,000,000 (P) | 91.4% |
| 11. Congregation of Christ, Brazil | 3,000,000 (P) | 91.4% |
| 12. Church of South India | 3,000,000 (A) | 6.2% |
| 13. Reformed Church Fed. Council, S. Africa | 2,800,000 (R) | 83.1% |
| 14. God Is Love Church, Brazil | 2,700,000 (A) | 91.4% |
| 15. Reformed Church, Indonesia | 2,700,000 (R) | 13.1% |
| 16. Evangelical Church of W. Africa, Nigeria | 2,500,000 (I) | 45.9% |
| 17. Batak Church, Lutheran, Indonesia | 2,500,000 (L) | 13.1% |
| 18. Methodist Church, S. Africa | 2,500,000 (M) | 83.1% |
| 19. Church of Jesus Christ, Madagascar | 2,500,000 (U) | 49.5% |
| 20. Baptist Convention, Nigeria | 2,500,000 (B) | 45.9% |
| 21. Pentecostal Church of Christ, Indonesia | 2,500,000 (P) | 13.1% |
| 22. Anglican Church, S. Africa | 2,400,000 (A) | 83.1% |
| 23. Philippine Independent Church (Aglipay) | 2,400,000 (I) | 89.7% |
| 24. Anglican Church, Tanzania | 2,300,000 (A) | 50.4% |
| 25. Lutheran Church, Tanzania | 2,200,000 (L) | 50.4% |
| 26. Presbyterian Church Korea (Hapdong) | 2,100,000 (R) | 40% |
| 27. Presbyterian Church Korea (Tonghap, WCC) | 2,050,000 (R) | 40% |
| 28. Jesus Assembly of God, Korea | 2,000,000 (P) | 40% |
| 29. Independent Catholic Church, Philippines | 2,000,000 (I) | 89.7% |
| 30. Pentecostals of Brazil in Christ | 2,000,000 (P) | 91.4% |
| 31. Burma (Myanmar) Baptist Convention | 1,750,000 (B) | 8.3% |
| 32. Manalista Church of Christ, Philippines | 1,750,000 (I) | 89.7% |
| 33. Baptist Churches of NE India | 1,600,000 (B) | 6.2% |
| 34. Methodist Church, Nigeria | 1,500,000 (M) | 45.9% |
| 35. Evangelical Lutheran Churches, India | 1,500,000 (L) | 6.2% |
| 36. Brazil Baptist Convention | 1,400,000 (B) | 91.4% |
| 37. Methodist Church, Korea | 1,300,000 (M) | 40% |
| 38. United Church of North India | 1,300,000 (U) | 6.2% |

[Cf. German Evangelical, 29m; Ch. of Eng., 24.5m; S.Bapt.USA, 21.5m; Methodist USA 11m]

- Source: David Barnett, *World Christian Enc., 2000, vol. 1*

⁴ country's percentage of Christians in population.

⁵ Number adjusted to lower scale of suggested estimates.

2 hrs largest, etc., large, 400 yrs. 2 m n
 1-5 (400 yrs) - 4 yrs

1. Question: Why is the rest of the world so much?

Religion - All the great religions of the world are from Asia

Buddhism, Confucius, - Mohism, Hinduism - Jainism 8.5%

2. Question - Why did it need one more - does it go to the full?

So it is not a - but it is to the limit - How can it be
 so much and still not stop and still be there

3. In the Roman Empire more so in the East than in the West

Part 3 of the Yung-yas - K'ien - in the East
 (Spartan 2, large, and 13) Schenck - 17th - 18th

4. Why did the world in Asia almost catch up with the West

China & India: 1773 2 or 2.5 m pop - 100 m

5. Barnett 1500 - 1970 Xh.

1900 - 39.4% Xh [Asia 8.5%]

Wom. 1500 - 1900 In the East

In the East: 1st

You will find the Christian world

People of the world

Paradise

1550 - Asia: large, small, & people

Field-Governed Mission Structures

Part III: Matteo Ricci and the Early Jesuit Mission to China

by Joseph & Michele C.



he Jesuit mission in China in the 16th-18th centuries has been described as "the greatest missionary work which the world till then had seen" (Hollis, p. 67). It presents another interesting study in field governance and home/field relationships in mission, and another opportunity to learn from history in order to avoid the mistakes found there.

Matteo Ricci, born in 1552, was the chief pioneer of the Jesuit mission in China who became one of the most respected and effective missionaries of the Church there. He and his colleague Ruggerius first gained permanent residence in 1583 in the capital of Kwantung near Canton and quietly worked to build friendships and to deepen their knowledge of Chinese language and culture. Stephen Neill suggests that this was especially remarkable since in Neill's view,

China proved for a long time far less accessible to the Gospel than Japan. The well-known Chinese xenophobia kept the doors entirely closed, except as the Chinese themselves expressed it, 'to members of subject races who come to pay tribute'. The Chinese of that period regarded theirs as the only true civilization in the world (Neill, p. 138, 139)

Ricci eventually came to have a profound knowledge of the Chinese language, of Chinese culture, and of classic Chinese literature, as well as a deep understanding of the nuances of Confucian philosophy. Ricci's scholarly abilities and his training in the sciences served him well. Since he and his colleagues had no protection under any treaty in order to remain to do their work, they had "to establish and strengthen their relations with that scholar class in whose hand were most of the offices of state" (Latourette, 1929, p. 93).

Though most of the Chinese were very wary of foreigners, "in some quarters a restlessness, a dissatisfaction with the accepted philosophies, and a spirit of inquiry existed and promised a certain amount of receptivity to foreign ideas" (Ibid.). With considerable determination and after much persistence in building relationships with scholars and officials, Ricci attained his goal of being allowed to settle in the capital, Peking in 1601.

Ricci's mission was outstandingly effective in winning their Chinese friends to the Christian faith. Latourette describes Ricci's success thus:

The position of Ricci and his companions had its desired effect and opened doors in other parts of the Empire... Numerous conversions were made and the state of public opinion was such that it was possible to administer baptism openly

Joseph and Michele have worked for fifteen years in North Africa. Joseph is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University. Michele is an R.N. and also an M.A. candidate at Fuller Seminary. They have two children.

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At Peking there were conversions among some of the highest officials. By 1605 the Peking mission numbered more than 200 neophytes. More Jesuits entered the country, and steps were taken to train a native clergy in a college at Macao (Latourette, 1929, p.96).

were expelled to Macao. In 1620 the Jesuits were summoned back.

It is important to note here that prior to 1622 the Roman Catholic Church had no mission-specific centralized administrative or supervisory structure to which Catholic missionaries were to

had been created, it was inevitable that successors would turn out to be people with less understanding of the field and less humility about their own personal level of authority. This led to inevitable conflict with field missionaries. In the best cases this greatly hindered the effectiveness of the missionaries; in the worst cases it destroyed the fledgling church on the field.

This pattern can be seen in the Vatican's creation of the Propaganda in the 17th century and its relationship to the Jesuit mission in China. The first secretary of the Propaganda, Francesco Ingoli was a man deeply sympathetic with the concerns of the field and with the various cultures and peoples among whom missionaries were serving. The problems which arose later were not because of any flaw in Ingoli personally, but rather because of the inherent flaw in a structure which sought to govern strategy in China and to make decisions about Chinese language and culture from an office in Rome.

Stephen Neill's description of Ingoli and of his missiological vision is worth quoting at some length to illustrate this:

[Ingoli was] one of the most remarkable missionary statesmen of whom we have record. Determined that action should be taken only on the basis of accurate knowledge, he first set himself to acquire the fullest possible information about the state of the missions in every part of the world. Then he decided on certain lines of action. Missionary work must be freed from the stranglehold that Spain and Portugal had been able to maintain upon it.... An indigenous clergy must be developed as rapidly as possible in every part of the world. The Christian faith must be delivered from those colonial associations which condemned it to be everywhere and in permanence a foreign religion. The prophetic quality of the mind of Propaganda in its early days is to be seen most notably in the instructions which it sent out in 1659, ten years after the death of Ingoli, to its vicars apostolic: 'Do not regard it as your task, and do not bring any pressure to bear on the peoples, to change their manners, customs, and uses, unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain and Italy,

In the best cases this greatly hindered the effectiveness of the missionaries; in the worst cases it destroyed the fledgling church on the field.

Much of what gave the Jesuits favor in the eyes of the governing officials was the fact that those officials saw the Jesuits as making a positive contribution to Chinese society. Ricci also believed that

there was no hope of making any impression on (the Chinese) if one delivered no more than a direct frontal attack on all their customs. On the contrary, since the Christian revelation was for all men and since men were of an infinite variety, it was necessary to respect the customs of others wherever this was possible, and to interfere only where it was absolutely necessary (Hollis, p. 63).

Ricci did deep research into the culture, language and classic literature, and based on that, he carefully evaluated which elements of the culture were compatible with Christian doctrine and which were not. As Hollis points out,

The argument of Ricci's most famous apologetic work, *The Teaching of the Lord of Heaven*, was that Confucians of his day, so far as they indulged in superstitions, did so because they had corrupted the original teaching of Confucius. Go back to the original teaching, he argued, and you will find that it leads much more logically to Christian conclusions than to the conclusions of its present followers (Hollis, p.65).

The effectiveness of Ricci's approach may be seen in Neill's conclusion that

Under Ricci's wise guidance the mission continued to flourish. At the time of Ricci's death, on 10 May 1610, it was reckoned that the Church had about 2,000 members (Neill, p. 141).

In 1611, the year after Ricci died, a persecution of the Jesuits erupted. They

related (Addison, p.106). Of course Ricci and his colleagues acknowledged the authority of the pope, but the Vatican had no mission-specific structure to implement practical missiological control over field missionaries. Ricci consulted with his colleagues in China and with such officials as the Visitor Valignano in Macao, and they made decisions on the field about the strategy and work of the mission.

Having invested themselves in the deep study of the language and the culture, and having committed themselves to the service of the Chinese, they were able to win the respect of the Chinese people and to gain access to people in the interior of the country. Such access had previously been denied. They were also able to win the favor of high-ranking officials, some of whom eventually came to faith in Christ. As a field-led mission they did very well in building relationships with influential Chinese, in building up an indigenous Christian community, and in producing Chinese Christian literature (Neill, p.140).

However, a major structural change took place in 1622 when Rome created a new institution for the advancement and supervision of Catholic missions. It was known as the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (abbreviated as "the Propaganda") (Latourette, 1975, p.926). More than once in missions history (cf. the examples of Andrew Fuller and William Berger and their successors later in this paper), a home-base coordinating structure was created and initially operated by a godly person with strong sympathy for the concerns of the field. However, once the structure

or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them, but only the faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wishes to see them preserved unharmed. It is the nature of men to love and treasure above everything else their own country and that which belongs to it; in consequence there is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on local customs, especially when these go back to a venerable antiquity. This is more especially the case, when an attempt is made to introduce the customs of another people and those of Europe; do your utmost to adapt yourselves to them.' Even when customs are bad and have to be changed, so run the instructions (of the Propaganda), it is better to do this gradually, and by helping the people themselves to see what is perverse in them rather than by any direct attack or condemnation in words (Neill, p.152, 153).

This lengthy quotation is cited here to demonstrate that initially there was a great concern on the part of the Propaganda to be sensitive to the local culture. This stands in contrast to the attitude of those who became involved later, who did not show this kind of sensitivity.

As noted earlier, the Jesuit mission in China was remarkably fruitful. By 1664, only eighty years after Ricci had first gained residency in China, the number of Catholics in China was recorded as well over 200,000. Because the growing numbers were more than the Jesuits could handle themselves, they called on other religious orders to come. "It was with their arrival that the mission's real troubles began" (Hollis, p. 65).

The focus of the problem was a prolonged dispute that lasted 100 years, known as the "Rites Controversy."

This had to do with the term to be used for the translation of the word 'God'... and with the questions concerning the permissibility of participation by Christians in the customary Chinese rites of honor of ancestors and Confucius... If the Church conscientiously felt that they must be forbidden to Christians, the faith would appear an enemy to traditional Chinese beliefs and practices

and destructive of such fundamental bases of society and the state as the family and the Confucian school. Most of the Jesuits favored toleration, but many members of other missionary organizations vigorously opposed it. The controversy lasted... until the final papal decision in 1742. Much of the ecclesiastical Roman Catholic world entered into the discussion. Jealousies between orders, rivalries among European nations, the Portuguese claim of the right to control the Church in the Far East, and the rising tide of feeling in Europe against the Jesuits (for other reasons) complicated the debate. The Pope finally decided against toleration (Latourette, 1947, p.318).

In this paper we are not attempting to analyze in depth the specific cultural issues at stake here or to argue for a specific position on them. Ricci attempted, for example, to distinguish between honoring one's ancestors and worshiping them, since the former is clearly a Christian duty (Exodus 20:12) and the latter is, equally clearly, incompatible with Christian faith. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to judge whether Ricci was correct in his analysis of

whether certain carefully circumscribed actions by Chinese Christians would be interpreted by the Chinese culture of his time as honor or as worship. Rather, our concern is the issue of authority in mission structures, and the question of whether such decisions about Chinese culture and about mission strategy in China should have been made in China or in Rome. We are also concerned to observe what impact the administrative structure and the decision-making process had upon the effectiveness of the work in China.

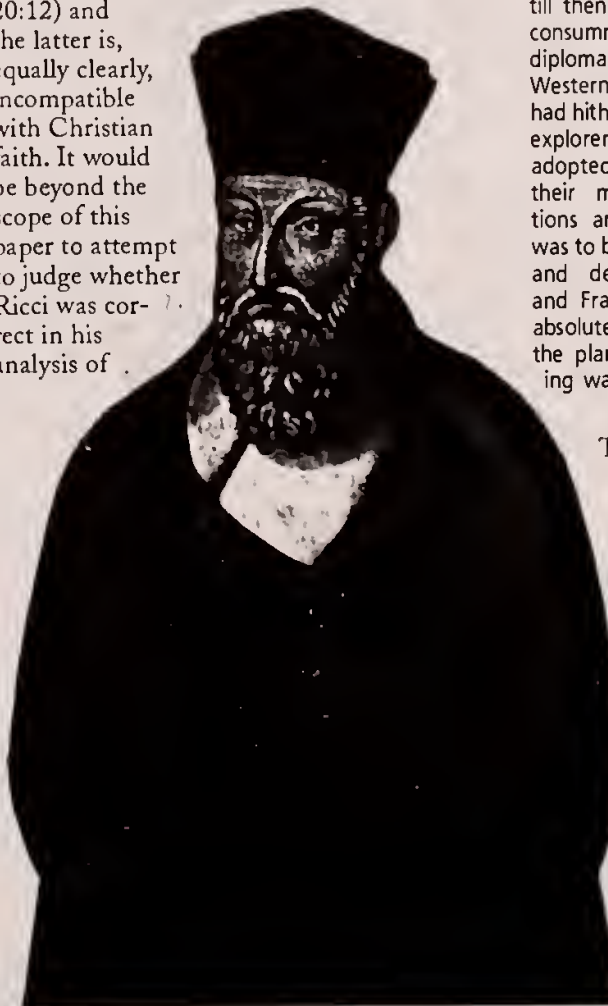
Hollis offers his interpretation of the events and quotes from J.E. Jenkins:

The Jesuits were not guiltless, but they were a great deal more sinned against than sinning... Their opponents were people from outside coming in to spoil it. One can hardly dispute Jenkins' verdict:

They had been founders and architects of the greatest missionary work which the world till then had seen. By the most consummate prudence and skilful diplomacy they had opened to the Western world an Empire which had hitherto been closed to every explorer. The method they had adopted had succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectations and now their life work was to be suddenly broken down and destroyed by Dominican and Franciscan rivals who were absolutely unable to estimate the plan upon which the building was laid out (Hollis, p. 67).

The Rites Controversy was "doubtless up to a point a sincere controversy, but it was exacerbated by national rivalries between the Jesuits, who were mainly Spanish, and the Dominicans, who were mainly Portuguese" (Hollis, p.72).

To estimate the relation of early Confucian to Christian thought there was required not only a deep knowledge of the Christian teaching but also a deep knowledge of Chinese teaching and



life. The Jesuits could at least claim to have acquired such knowledge by many years of intimate experience. Rome sent out to judge them two bishops, de Tournon (1704-1710) and Maigrot (1719-1721), who were not even acquainted with the characters of Chinese writing. 'One wonders' said the Emperor K'ang Hsi on reading the facile accusation which they leveled of Chinese atheism, 'how the ignorant and contemptible Europeans dare to speak of the Great Doctrine of the Chinese, these men who know nothing about either its rules or its practices and cannot perhaps even understand the characters in which they are written.' Whether the Jesuits were right, there seems at least little question about it that their antagonists were wrong. One of the new priests, speaking through an interpreter, told his congregation that Confucius and all his ancestors were in hell and that the Jesuits had taught them wrong doctrine. The result was, as was to be expected, persecution (Hollis, p. 67).

Hollis goes on to say,

Any plan to dictate from Rome the details of Catholic policy in China was in the conditions of that time an absurdity. Men at Rome knew and could know nothing of conditions in China... If any success was to be achieved, there was no alternative but to allow the men on the spot, who alone could know the conditions, to take the decisions for themselves (Hollis, p. 69).

Of the papal decision Latourette writes,

The most serious indictment which can be brought against the papal decision is that it established a tradition for making the Church unadaptable to Chinese conditions and beliefs. It tended and still tends to keep the Roman Catholic Church a foreign institution, one to which China must conform, but which refuses to conform to China (Latourette, 1929, p. 154).

In 1742 the pope ruled against Ricci's approach to Chinese culture and placed crippling restrictions on the Jesuit mission in China. Then, in 1773, for reasons which had little to do with the work in China, the pope took the radical step of completely dissolving (i.e. banning) the Jesuit order worldwide. It is important to emphasize that the reasons for the dissolution of the Jesuit

order were to be found in Europe, not in China. This fact demonstrates another weakness inherent in the governing structure of the mission to China. Back in Europe the Jesuit order became entangled in political and even commercial forces which had little to do with their missionary confreres' work in China. This eventually led to the dissolution of the Jesuit order worldwide and consequently destroyed most of the work that the missionaries in China had labored so sacrificially to establish there (Latourette, 1929, p. 166).

Latourette also comments on the influence of the opponents of the Jesuits in Europe, which stands in contrast to the eventual attitudes of most missionaries of other orders in China towards the Jesuits:

The Society had bitter enemies in Europe, even within the fold of the Catholic Church, and these welcomed such evidences of depravity as Navarette (a vigorous opponent to the Jesuits) seemed to disclose. In China nearly all Franciscans and Augustinians had been won to the Jesuit position and only the Dominicans continued as a body to stand against it. Even among these last there was division, and it is interesting—and perhaps significant of what a purely Chinese church would have done—that in 1681 and 1686 Gregory Lopez (a Chinese Christian who had taken a European name) came out... in defence of Ricci's position (Latourette, 1929, p. 138).

It is important to understand some of the rivalry which developed in China among the missionaries and how that exacerbated the problem with the Propaganda in Rome. Rowbotham describes the rivalry of some Dominican and Franciscan priests who he thinks

felt that fervor and faith were adequate substitutes for wise planning in the missionary field... They preached Christ crucified in a way that permitted no compromise with the religious practices of the country, which they branded offhand as idolatrous. They preached publicly in the streets, using their own language and relying on interpreters of doubtful ability. They were dogmatic, unyielding, and either oblivious to, or careless of, the fact that they were constantly wounding

the susceptibilities of the Chinese. These tactics... were... unsuitable to the Chinese situation. From the start such methods had given the Jesuits a great deal of trouble, and it is not to be wondered at that the persistence of the members of other orders caused many misgivings among the Jesuits (Rowbotham, p. 133).

The problem of the rites controversy was also aggravated and greatly prolonged by the complexity of the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Rowbotham comments on this and on the consequences of the long, drawn-out dispute:

It is not expected that the central authority of the Church should have radically surrendered its responsibilities in matters of doctrinal jurisdiction, but it is clear that a greater degree of local autonomy would certainly have hastened the end of the quarrel... The most tragic element in the controversy is, of course, the fact that the two opposing factions ignored the greatest danger of all: that of disunity, of presenting... a front disrupted by dissension. This was a danger far greater than that of doctrinal differences (Rowbotham, p. 298).

To fully appreciate the way in which the rites controversy and the struggle for a decision in the context of a cumbersome, centralized authoritative structure distracted the missionaries from their primary task of evangelism and church-planting, we will look at the numerous trips made between China and Rome over the years in an attempt to settle the dispute. It is no wonder that historians tell of the confusion in China over just what the missionaries' superiors in Rome were asking of them (Rowbotham, p. 136).

After the Dominicans and Franciscans were established in China they took the question about the rites to bishops in the Philippines. The Jesuits in the Philippines defended the Jesuits in China.

In 1635 the Archbishop of Manila denounced the Jesuit practices to the Pope, but in 1638 withdrew his accusation (Latourette, 1929, pp. 135, 136).

Morales, a Dominican, led the opposition and (after being expelled from China during the persecution of 1637)

presented his case to the Propaganda in Europe in 1643 (Ibid., p. 136). In 1645 the Propaganda issued a decree in which the Jesuit practices described by Morales were prohibited (Ibid., pp. 136, 137). In 1651 the Jesuits sent Martini to Rome to present their case. In 1656 the Holy Office issued another decree "giving sanction to the practices as described in the Jesuits statement." (Ibid., p. 137). In 1661 Morales (a Dominican) "submitted a new memorandum to the Holy Office (of the Inquisition)" stating that the Jesuits had misrepresented the facts (Ibid., p. 137). In 1669 a decree approved by the Pope explained that the decree of 1645 was not annulled by that of 1656 "but that both were to be observed 'according to the questions, circumstances, and everything set forth in them'" (Ibid., p. 138). Huge amounts of time and energy were diverted in the writing of many volumes about this controversy in both Europe and China.

Latourette writes of the papal legate Tournon and his visit to China on the Propaganda's behalf:

One's sympathies cannot but go out both to Tournon and to the missionaries. Charged with the task of upholding the papal prerogatives and decrees in a distant land, ill, and with little experience in the East, the Legate found those contumacious whom he believed ought to be his supporters. On the other hand, missionaries who had given their best years to establishing the Church in China saw the edifice built by over a century of sacrifice threatened by the tactlessness and obduracy of a young man who was ignorant of China and of whose authority they believed there was ground for question. The Emperor received Tournon at first with courtesy, if not with cordiality, but he was more and more antagonized by him. . . K'ang Hsi (the Emperor) was even more antagonized by Maigrot [the legate who came from Rome some years later]. . . He also ordered the Legate to prepare for an early return to Europe (Latourette, 1929, p. 143).

With the coming of the Legate the Church began to suffer. Concentration upon the dispute was not conducive to progress in evangelization (Latourette, 1929, p. 156).

Once again this situation demonstrates

The conclusion of this long, tortured process was that in 1742 the pope ruled against the Jesuits and placed crippling restrictions on the Jesuit mission in China.

how the structure in place created inevitable conflicts, because those making decisions were far removed from the context in which those decisions had to be enforced.

With the visit of Tournon (who was sent by the Propaganda in 1704) a series of misfortunes began. . . which were for over a hundred years greatly to retard the Church and then for a few decades to threaten it with extinction (Latourette, 1929, p. 156).

As we have noted above, the conclusion of this long, tortured process was that in 1742 the pope ruled against the Jesuits and placed crippling restrictions on the Jesuit mission in China. Then in 1773 the pope totally dissolved the Jesuit order worldwide. The effect of this on the Chinese Church was disastrous.

Stephen Neill describes the rapid collapse of the work in China which resulted:

The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of tragic collapse for the Roman Catholic missions. In China, as the Jesuits had feared, Roman interference and the imprudence of some of their brethren led to wave upon wave of persecution. Though persecution was intermittent and a number of missionaries were able to escape the net, numbers were always few, martyrdoms were many, and everywhere the tale was of diminishing congregations, of ruined churches, and of steadily deepening shadows. . . In this period, in which the missionary work of the Church had run into grave difficulties, a final blow was struck by the dissolution of the Jesuit Order. As a result of the dissolution at least 3,000 missionaries [worldwide] were withdrawn from their fields. A certain number gave up the name of Jesuit and remained at their posts; the great majority were given no choice—they were put on board ship like cattle and carried off to their country of origin. They were literally irreplaceable, the Pope had condemned Roman Catholic missions

to temporary eclipse (Neill, pp. 173-175).

In reading the story of the collapse of the Church in China, the modern reader cannot help noting that after 200 years of work the foreign missionaries had still not trained and ordained enough Chinese clergy to carry on the work of the Church after the withdrawal of the missionaries. But this too was a direct consequence of the decision-making structure of the mission. The training and ordination of large numbers of Chinese clergy was greatly slowed down by Rome's insistence on Latin liturgy and Latin-language literacy.

After the leadership of the Jesuits in China passed from Schall (Ricci's successor) to Verbiest, Verbiest requested that they be allowed to institute a Chinese liturgy. Hollis notes that just as Rome had denied the Swedish Church permission to conduct the liturgy in Swedish, so also a Chinese liturgy was denied (Hollis, p. 68). This meant that Chinese clergy had to learn to say the liturgy in Latin. In many cases they did not even understand the meaning of the words they were speaking. (Imagine what the impact would have been on the Church in Italy if Italian priests had been required to say the Mass in Chinese!) Once again the mission's administrative structure led to an important decision being made without the necessary understanding of the situation on the field or of the consequences of such a decision.

In this context the consequences of the centralized decisions from Rome, including the 1742 decision against the Jesuit approach and the 1773 dissolution of the Jesuit order, were disastrous for the Chinese Church:

In 1784 two bishops and sixteen European priests were rounded up [by the Chinese government]; six of these died in chains. Something of Chinese Christianity survived, it is not surprising

that it was not very much, and that in the nineteenth century almost everything had to be done afresh from the start (Neill, p. 174).

As a direct consequence of a Rome-centered structure of mission governance, a Chinese Church which had seen dramatic growth from no members to over 200,000 members in just 80 years in the 17th century experienced an equally dramatic collapse at the end of the 18th century.

In Summary

Ricci and his colleagues, operating a field-governed mission, gained access where access had been previously denied, established a growing community of believers, developed appropriate Chinese Christian literature and nurtured favorable relationships with the Chinese authorities and scholars. After Ricci died, the Propaganda was created and began with a sensitive and sympathetic secretary, Francesco Ingoli. Around that time the rites controversy arose and missionaries from other orders began settling to work in China. Representatives of some of those other orders complained to their superiors in Rome about the practices of the Jesuits in China. The Jesuits became entangled in rivalries and disputes and wasted much time and energy defending their practices and teachings. This was not conducive to the progress of their mission. Others succeeded Ingoli in the Propaganda, and inappropriate envoys then sent by Rome offended the Chinese authorities. Persecution of Christians in China immediately followed.

The creation of the Propaganda sprang from good motives and began with an attitude of sensitivity towards the local cultures and languages of peoples among whom Catholic missionaries worked. However, as difficult quandaries arose, the geographical and linguistic position of the Propaganda gave it a worldview that made it unable to gain the understanding necessary to make wise decisions in a timely manner. Even if a decision made in Rome could be considered the right one, the years and years of debate and committee

meetings and controversy, while messengers traveled back and forth between China and Rome, took a great toll on the work of the missionaries and on the unity of the Church in China. Already-existing rivalries were exacerbated by the controversy and by the confusion created by the manner in which the Propaganda dealt with the matter.

In our opinion, the authority for such decisions should have been delegated to the leader of the Jesuits in China in consultation with the bishop or Vicar Apostolic in the nearest regional center of Catholic operations such as Macao. One can only guess at how different the Chinese Church and missions in China might have looked in the following centuries, if important missiologically strategic decisions could have been left to those in positions of leadership on the field.

Many hold that the struggle and the papal decrees ruined the mission, and that but for them China would, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have become Roman Catholic (Latourette, 1929, p. 152). **IJFM**

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